

INTERNATIONAL SECURITY / MIDDLE EAST UPDATE
February 4 - 18, 2010

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1. [Biden Discusses U.S. Nuclear Agenda](#) (02-18-2010)

Outlines plans for preventing nuclear weapons spread

By Merle David Kellerhals Jr.
Staff Writer

Washington — Vice President Biden says the United States will do everything in its power to keep nuclear weapons from falling into the hands of terrorists or spreading to states that do not already have them.

But Biden also emphasized that the United States recognizes that as its own technology improves, researchers are developing non-nuclear ways to deter potential adversaries without relying on the nuclear weapons deterrence that characterized the Cold War period of the 20th century.

“The spread of nuclear weapons is the greatest threat facing the country and, I would argue, facing humanity,” Biden said in a February 18 speech at the National Defense University in Washington. “And that is why we’re working both to stop their proliferation and eventually to eliminate them.”

“But until that day comes, we have to do everything in our power to maintain our national arsenal and make sure it’s reliable,” he added.

Biden outlined the plan for implementing President Obama’s nonproliferation and nuclear security agenda, and also addressed budget needs and other efforts to support the president’s vision of reducing nuclear dangers worldwide.

In April 2009 in Prague, Obama [laid out a vision](#) for protecting the United States from nuclear threats, but also made clear that he was seeking a world free of nuclear weapons. Biden said the Obama administration is working to strengthen the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty and to gain ratification in the U.S. Senate for the Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty, which was designed to keep emerging nuclear states from perfecting their arsenals and prevent rivals from pursuing more advanced weapons systems.

In his speech, Biden said nuclear research laboratories and the Defense Department have been developing capabilities like an adaptive missile defense shield, conventional warheads with worldwide reach and other systems that will enable the United States to reduce the role of nuclear weapons in its national security arsenal.

Obama asked Congress for \$7 billion in the fiscal year 2011 federal budget to maintain the existing nuclear stockpile while also modernizing the U.S. nuclear infrastructure, which includes U.S. research and development laboratories operated by the U.S. Energy Department. The request represents a \$624 million increase from the current fiscal year’s budget, which runs from October 1, 2009, to September 30, 2010, and includes spending an additional \$5 billion for those projects over the next five years.

“This investment is not only consistent with a nonproliferation agenda, we argue it’s essential to pursue a nonproliferation agenda,” Biden said. “Guaranteeing our stockpile, coupled with broader research and development efforts, allows us to pursue deeper nuclear reductions, without in any way compromising our security.”

One of the most significant factors in nuclear weapons research by the United States has been its ability to conduct testing through the Stockpile Stewardship Program, which does not require underground, atmospheric or underwater explosions, Biden said. The program was launched 18 years ago by President George H.W. Bush when he signed a nuclear-testing moratorium enacted by Congress.

The United States and Russia are negotiating a new arms agreement that would succeed the 1991 Strategic Arms Reduction Treaty, or START I, which expired December 5, 2009. Obama and Russian President Dmitry Medvedev [tentatively agreed](#) in July 2009 to seek a new treaty that reduces existing arsenals to between 1,500 and 1,675 warheads each. Talks paused during December 2009 for the holidays and resumed late last month in Geneva.

Under Secretary of State Ellen Tauscher told reporters recently that the two sides are quite close to reaching an accord.

Biden said that the president will host a Global Nuclear Security Summit April 12-13 in Washington to advance his goals of securing all vulnerable nuclear materials within four years. "It's a very high priority. We cannot wait; we cannot wait for an act of nuclear terrorism before coming together to share the best practices and raise security standards," he said.

And in May "we will participate in a Non-Proliferation Treaty review conference. We are rallying support for stronger measures to strengthen inspection and to punish cheaters," Biden added.

[Vice President Biden's Speech at National Defense University](#) (02-18-2010)

Biden cites President Obama's Prague agenda for nuclear

[Under Secretary of State Tauscher on Nuclear Deterrence](#) (02-18-2010)

United States, Russia moving to era of "mutual assured stability"

[Ambassador Hill on Iraqi Elections and U.S.-Iraqi Relations](#) (02-17-2010)

Hill answers questions from reporters on the situation in Iraq

2. Sanctions Proposals Offer Options for U.S. Policy on Iran (02-18-2010)

Although the president makes final decisions, Congress has its say

By Jeff Baron
Staff Writer

Washington — While the United States prods other governments to impose tougher sanctions on Iran over its nuclear program, some members of the U.S. Congress are prodding the U.S. government to do the same.

Each house of Congress has passed a proposal that would impose a wide array of sanctions against Iran and people or companies that do business with it. The versions in each chamber are slightly different and must be reconciled before being sent to the president. Among the provisions in the bills:

- Sanctions would cover any person or company that helps Iran import gasoline or other petroleum products or that helps the country expand its refineries.
- The trade of most products between the United States and Iran, except for food and medicine imported by Iran, would be banned.
- A broad range of financial companies would be prohibited from backing business deals involving Iran.
- Companies that do business with Iran's energy sector or that provide equipment with which Iran restricts communications would be barred from doing business with the U.S. government.
- Assets belonging to Iran's Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps and other Iranians involved in abuses of human rights, nuclear arms and terrorism would be frozen. The U.S. Treasury Department [already announced](#) a similar policy, acting against a Revolutionary Guard-controlled corporation and its commander.

"The President of the United States has rightly adopted a two-track policy, in my view, of engagement backed by the prospect of further sanctions, and I support his approach," said a statement from Senator Chris Dodd of Connecticut, chairman of the Senate Banking Committee and

one of the bill's main sponsors. "Our legislation strengthens what has come to be known as the 'pressure track.'

"We must send a clear signal to Iran's leaders that, if they continue to defy the will of the international community, our nation is prepared to confront them on that."

Senate leaders said a final bill also should include other financial penalties and visa restrictions for Iranian officials who have abused human rights. An additional proposal, offered by two Republican senators but not passed, would support efforts within Iran to replace the government.

The proposals go further than the current policy of the Obama administration. But they suggest how members of Congress support or try to influence U.S. foreign policy.

Patrick Clawson, an Iran specialist and deputy director of research at the Washington Institute for Near East Policy, said members of Congress are not trying to confront the administration over its approach to Iran. American politicians traditionally tend to limit their public disagreements with their president on issues of foreign policy, a principle expressed by a long-ago senator who declared, "Politics stops at the water's edge." What's more, with Congress and the White House controlled by the same political party, Clawson said, the two institutions tend to cooperate.

As Clawson noted, the tough sanctions imposed on Libya and Iran in 1996 were approved by a Republican Congress and sent to a Democratic president, Bill Clinton. But Clawson said this Congress, despite the skepticism of some Republicans, accepted the approach President Obama set when he took office: an effort to engage the Iranian government in discussions to lessen the threat of its nuclear program, with the threat of what Secretary of State Hillary Rodham Clinton in April called "crippling" sanctions if it did not respond to diplomacy. On February 16, during a visit to Jeddah, Saudi Arabia, [she said of the sanctions](#) that the United States and others are seeking at the United Nations: "We want to send a clear message that it's not about the Iranian people; this is about the Revolutionary Guard."

Congress is not trying to force action by the Obama administration but is trying to give it a greater range of options in acting against Iran, Clawson said. "It's not Congress saying, 'You've got to do this,'" he said. "It's Congress saying that 'we want you to have this arrow in your quiver.'"

The option that has gotten the most attention is the proposal to clamp down on the flow of gasoline to Iran, which exports oil but relies on imports of refined petroleum products.

Hadi Ghaemi, director of the International Campaign for Human Rights in Iran, a U.S.-based nongovernmental advocacy group, said a gasoline embargo or any other broad economic sanctions would be wrong and counterproductive. "We are broadly against any sanctions that hurt the Iranian people," he said.

Ghaemi said an action such as a gasoline embargo would cause suffering among Iranians generally while strengthening the position of the Revolutionary Guard, which would control the smuggling routes from Iran's neighbors. He compared the situation to that of Iraq in the 1990s, where he said sanctions caused suffering among the Iraqi people.

Any sanctions, Ghaemi said, must be "targeted" and "carefully researched."

"Punish government and government officials for its policies, not the people. That is collective punishment," he said.

Clawson said the sanctions bills would not require the Obama administration to use a gasoline embargo. And he said the approach already under way — of sanctions against the Revolutionary Guard and its leaders — is supported in Congress as well.

The legislation also serves as a reminder that Congress wants to be consulted about Iran. “Congress wants the administration to talk about the options,” Clawson said.

Ghaemi said the only effective sanctions are those taken by the international community, not the United States alone. He said U.S. sanctions that have been in place against Iran for decades have caused that country some problems but have failed to influence the regime in Tehran.

In the long run, Ghaemi said, international sanctions — whether imposed over the nuclear issue or over human rights violations — make sense for the future of Iran and for the interests of nations that want to do business with a stable Iran.

3. Capture of Taliban Leader “A Significant Win,” White House Says (02-17-2010)

By Stephen Kaufman
Staff Writer

Washington — The Obama administration confirmed reports that the Pakistani government has Afghan Taliban military commander Mullah Abdul Ghani Baradar in custody, saying the capture of the movement’s number two leader is a big success for U.S. and Pakistani cooperation against violent extremism in the South Asia region.

White House press secretary Robert Gibbs told reporters February 17 that Pakistan recognizes extremists within its borders pose “an existential threat” to their country.

“They have been working productively and cooperatively for more than a year now in assisting international efforts and cooperating in an effort to rid that area of violent extremists,” Gibbs said, adding that the capture of Mullah Baradar is “a significant win.”

At the same time, the commander of U.S. forces in Afghanistan, General Stanley McChrystal, and U.S. Ambassador to Kabul Karl Eikenberry told President Obama that Afghan-led operations in Helmand province are going well, Gibbs said.

Operation Moshtarak, a Dari word which means “together,” was “highly planned and orchestrated,” Gibbs said, and is being conducted in close coordination with local Afghan authorities. Extra caution is being paid to prevent civilian casualties, and Gibbs added that many individuals with the Taliban have decided to leave their former stronghold in the town of Marjah.

“Ambassador Eikenberry and General McChrystal lauded not just the size of this offensive but that for the first time, Afghan national security forces were in the lead,” Gibbs said. Troops from the multinational International Security Assistance Force (ISAF) are fighting alongside the Afghan forces “at a scale not seen at any point in our involvement in Afghanistan, dating back to the beginning of the war” in 2001, Gibbs said.

According to a February 17 news release by ISAF, the military phase of Operation Moshtarak “remains on track” as of February 16.

“The insurgents are tactically adept, have resilience and are cunning, so continued tactical patience on the part of the combined force is important. Mining is significant in areas, and the combined force must be very deliberate in its movement in order to minimize local Afghan and combined force casualties,” the news release stated.

The campaign includes ISAF forces from the United Kingdom, the United States, Denmark and Estonia, who are operating in support of the Afghan security and police forces.

“On the ground, the conduct of Operation Moshtarak is visibly demonstrating that the force has changed the way it operates and that it is working with and for the people of Afghanistan,” the news release said.

The goal of Operation Moshtarak is for the combined Afghan and international forces to “support the Government of the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan in asserting its authority in central Helmand, thereby demonstrating the Afghan government’s commitment to the people living there,” according to the news release.

“The operation is being conducted at the request of the Afghan government and the governor of Helmand. The security forces involved are serving side-by-side, representing partnership in strength,” the news release said.

State Department spokesman Mark Toner said February 17 that civilian forces are also involved in a support role to help the Afghan government “deliver governance and stability to the area immediately after the security operations.”

“They’re standing by to deploy immediately after Marjah’s cleared,” Toner said. “Civilians will form a district support team consisting of two State Department governance advisers, one U.S. Agency for International Development expert and a British stabilization adviser.”

Their effort is part of a larger strategy to build long-term stability. “If you simply provide security without bringing in the governance and development and assistance, it’s to no avail. So we’ve really got to make that happen very quickly,” Toner said.

According to a February 15 U.K. Ministry of Defense news article, traditional meetings, known as shuras, have been taking place between local residents and the Afghan national army as areas have been captured from Taliban control. The article said that after the “clearing phase” of operations is completed, the Afghan government and its international partners are establishing civil authority and amenities such as schools and hospitals to improve local conditions.

In addition, “Cash for Work” projects have been identified to provide local employment opportunities, and recruiting efforts will begin “straight away,” the article said.

British Defense Secretary Bob Ainsworth was quoted in the article as saying that now begins “the most important phase of the operation,” which he said is “winning over the hearts and minds of the people of Nad ’Ali and Marjah so that they don’t tolerate the Taliban in their midst, so that they are not intimidated by them and so the insurgency cannot re-establish itself in the area.”

British Air Chief Marshal Sir Jock Stirrup was quoted in the article as saying, "Time is a very important factor," with the local population needing to see quickly that the Afghan government will be staying and providing them with adequate security, support and services.

4. Iranian Decisions Increasingly Being Made by Revolutionary Guard (02-17-2010)

By Stephen Kaufman
Staff Writer

Washington — Secretary of State Hillary Rodham Clinton's observation that Iran's Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps (IRGC) is supplanting the country's political leadership reflects an assessment by U.S. officials that the IRGC is increasing its responsibility well beyond Iran's security sector.

The IRGC is influencing the country's decisions on the brutal suppression of Iran's political opposition and on President Obama's offers of engagement, U.S. officials say.

In a series of interviews February 16 in Jeddah, Saudi Arabia, Clinton said the Obama administration remains open to engagement with Iran to discuss Iranian nuclear activities and other areas of disagreement, but the U.S. offer has not been reciprocated. The international community is now discussing economic sanctions as a means of pressuring Iran to abide by its nuclear nonproliferation commitments, and Clinton said those [sanctions would likely target the increasingly powerful IRGC.](#)

"We see the ground shifting" inside Iran, Clinton told Bloomberg News. "Increasingly, the Revolutionary Guard seems to be filling the space that should be held under the Iranian system by either the clerical or the political leadership." Revolutionary Guard leaders have been assuming greater responsibility "not just in the security sector and not just for the nuclear program, but in the economic and political arenas as well," she said.

As a result, "the general conclusion is that there is something happening so that the political and the clerical leadership don't seem to be able to make the decisions," she said.

The Iranian people have seen the increased use of IRGC-controlled militia groups to suppress political opposition. Iranians have also been subjected to harsh judgments and "the passage of a law which makes it criminal and subject to the death penalty to, quote, 'wage war against God,' which basically gives total discretion to the security people to arrest, detain and even execute anyone," Clinton said.

Speaking to the BBC, she said it is "very clear" that the IRGC "are in the lead on this repression," and do not appear to be "accountable to anyone."

"The clerical leadership, the political elected leadership, seem to be ceding ground to the Revolutionary Guard. And we believe that the sanctions we're working on with the international community should be targeted at the Revolutionary Guard, particularly at their commercial interests, which are expanding dramatically," Clinton said.

On February 10, the Obama administration unilaterally targeted the IRGC [by imposing sanctions against one of its corporate entities, Khatam al-Anbiya Construction Headquarters,](#) and its commander, Rostam Qasemi, who is also a general in the IRGC.

The internal developments in Iran add to existing international concerns over Iran's nuclear intentions, with many fearing the onset of a [nuclear arms race](#) in the Middle East. In its collective approach to Iran, the international community has a choice, Clinton said.

"We can either just give in to the trends inside Iran, which I don't think bode well for world peace and nonproliferation; we can ignore them, which has the same effect; or we can try to influence them, which is what we are trying to do," she said.

She told the Voice of America that the Obama administration's outreach to Iran will continue.

"We're never going to close the door. We're not going to remove the outstretched hand," she said.

But just as the United Kingdom, France, Germany, Russia, China and the United States agreed to pursue engagement with Iran, they also agreed to the use of pressure and sanctions if engagement is unsuccessful.

"Now, we think that time has arrived and we're going to the U.N. Security Council," she said. As the international community moves toward sanctions, "we want to send a clear message that it's not about the Iranian people; this is about the Revolutionary Guard."

She told Al Arabiya that the focus is on individuals, institutions and businesses connected to the IRGC.

While many do not want to see sanctions levied against Iran, many in Iran do not want to see the end of their democracy, she said. "They don't want to see the rise of an unelected body or a nonclerical body, namely the Revolutionary Guard, assuming all of this power."

There is still an opportunity to try to convince Iran not to pursue nuclear weapons, but Iran's leaders need to choose to abide by U.N. Security Council resolutions and the rules established by the International Atomic Energy Agency, and they need to reassure their neighbors that they are not seeking nuclear weapons, Clinton said.

5. Concern Grows over Potential for Middle Eastern Nuclear Arms Race (02-16-2010)

By Merle David Kellerhals Jr.
Staff Writer

Washington — Secretary of State Hillary Rodham Clinton wrapped up a three-day Gulf diplomatic mission after consultations with key Middle Eastern leaders in Qatar, Saudi Arabia and the Organisation of the Islamic Conference as well as with regional business leaders and college students.

Clinton told Saudi college students February 16 that the long-term goal of the United States is to see the entire Middle East, including Iran, free of nuclear weapons. Her speech echoed a theme set by President Obama in a speech in April 2009 in Prague in which he called for a future time when the world would be nuclear free. It is a sweeping foreign policy goal he set in talks with his Russian counterpart, President Dmitry Medvedev, in several meetings in London and Moscow, and is a theme for which he [was awarded a Nobel Peace Prize](#) in 2009.

“If Iran gets a nuclear weapon, that hope disappears because then other countries which feel threatened by Iran will say to themselves, ‘If Iran has a nuclear weapon, I better get one, too, in order to protect my people,’” Clinton said. “Then you have a nuclear arms race in the region.”

“Everyone who I speak with in the Gulf, including the leaders here and leaders elsewhere in the region, are expressing deep concern about Iran’s intentions,” Clinton added in a speech at the all-women Dar al-Hekma College in Jeddah.

Clinton began her trip in Qatar February 14 with a [speech](#) before the U.S.-Islamic World Forum in Doha, followed by an engagement with students in Education City. She continued on to Riyadh and Jeddah in Saudi Arabia.

Between official meetings when she travels, the secretary often holds town hall meetings that involve direct contact with college students. Clinton meets with a wide range of civil society groups, women’s groups and students as part of an effort to reach out to those who often don’t have direct contact with senior U.S. officials.

Clinton told the Saudi women that the United States has worked to launch a new relationship with Iran based on diplomacy, and has sought to chart a path with Iran for a peaceful nuclear program within international safeguards. “But Iran has refused to reciprocate, and since October has refused every offer to meet with the international representatives on its nuclear program,” she [said at a press conference](#) with Saudi Foreign Minister Prince Saud al-Faisal on February 15 in Riyadh.

While in Jeddah, Clinton met with Secretary-General Ekmeleddin Ihsanoglu of the Organisation of the Islamic Conference.

The United States has been working closely with Britain, China, France, Germany and Russia to convince Iran to abandon its nuclear weapons development program. But Iran has responded to the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) that it will start producing higher-grade enriched uranium, which Clinton called a “provocative move” in defiance of U.N. Security Council resolutions.

“The Iranian government knows that this risks creating more regional instability and will result in increasing isolation,” she said. “You have to ask yourself, ‘Why are they doing this?’” Clinton said.

MIDDLE EAST PEACE

At her press conference in Riyadh, Clinton said the United States and Saudi Arabia share the goal of a comprehensive peace in the Middle East. After meeting with Saudi King Abdullah, the secretary said they discussed how best to re-launch what she called “credible and productive negotiations” on the Middle East that will achieve both Palestinian and Israeli hopes.

“The 2002 Arab Peace Initiative is vital to the efforts necessary to promote a comprehensive peace, and it lays out a vision of a better future for all of the region’s people,” Clinton said. “It is time to renew its spirit today and to move toward specifics.”

The United States is convinced that in “good-faith negotiations” the Israelis and Palestinians can agree on an outcome that ends the ongoing conflict and reconciles the Palestinian goal of an independent state based on the 1967 lines with the Israeli goal of a Jewish state with secure and recognized borders that meet Israeli concerns, Clinton said.

While encouraging negotiations, Clinton said, the international community must also support Palestinian Authority President Mahmoud Abbas, Prime Minister Salam Fayyad and the Palestinian Authority to build a viable economy and state institutions necessary for a working and independent government that provides security, rule of law and essential services to the Palestinian people.

To underscore the U.S. efforts in the Middle East, deputy secretaries of state James Steinberg and Jacob Lew are being sent to the region for further consultations across a range of issues including the stalled Middle East peace process and Iran's inadequate response to efforts to halt its nuclear development program.

Lew is slated to visit Egypt, Israel and Jordan beginning February 20, and Steinberg is traveling to Israel during the week of February 21. In addition, William Burns, the under secretary of state for political affairs, is traveling to Lebanon February 16, Syria February 17 and Turkey on February 18, and concludes his travel in Azerbaijan on February 19.

During the week of March 8, Vice President Biden and his wife, Jill Biden, will travel to Israel, the Palestinian Authority, Egypt and Jordan for consultations on a full range of bilateral and regional issues, the White House announced. Vice President Biden will meet with Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu, Palestinian President Abbas, Prime Minister Fayyad, Egyptian President Hosni Mubarak, and Jordanian King Abdullah II.

6. Clinton Cites Mutual Respect and Shared Values with Muslim World (02-14-2010)

By Stephen Kaufman
Staff Writer

Washington — Secretary of State Hillary Rodham Clinton renewed President Obama's call for a "new beginning" in relations between the United States and Muslim communities, as she urged a cooperative focus on common challenges and goals.

Speaking at the U.S.-Islamic World Forum in Doha, Qatar, February 14, Clinton said the Obama administration has "worked to alter the tone and deepen the substance of our relationships with people from all regions and all backgrounds" during its first year in office. The new U.S. approach rests on the three core pillars of "mutual respect, mutual interest and mutual responsibility; a shared commitment to universal values; and broad engagement with governments and citizens alike," she said.

Clinton said the message of President Obama's [June 4, 2009, speech in Cairo](#) remains vital in encouraging open dialogue and equal partnership.

"Building a stronger relationship cannot happen overnight or even in a year. It takes patience, persistence and hard work from all of us ... to take responsibility for retiring stereotypes and outdated views and for bringing a renewed sense of cooperation," she said.

The United States shares the values, hopes and ambitions that all hold "as mothers and fathers, students and workers, business leaders and social advocates, and members of the human family," she said.

Democratic reform is a critical element of progress in modern societies, Clinton said, and those who have a say in the decisions that affect their own lives, and who can freely access information and

express their views, are in the best position to fulfill their potential, which will also serve the interests of their country.

In addition, “women’s rights and national progress go hand in hand,” she said. “No country can achieve its full potential when half the population is left out or left behind.”

The secretary said violence against women “is not cultural. It is criminal.” She called for religious leaders to take a stand against practices such as honor killings, child marriages, and domestic and gender-based violence.

Violent extremism remains a threat to Muslim countries as well as the United States, Clinton said. “True and lasting security takes root in places where people have the opportunity to find jobs, to be educated, to raise healthy families, and benefit from the scientific and technological breakthroughs.”

The Obama administration believes that “education and innovation are the currency of this century,” and is working to expand educational opportunities, support entrepreneurs in the Muslim world through programs such as the Global Technology and Innovation Fund, and promote advances and exchanges in science and technology.

“Our goal is to identify excellent ideas and successful projects in Muslim communities and then invest in them, help to scale them up, and to connect innovators and entrepreneurs so they can support and enhance each other’s work,” she said.

The United States shares the view of Islamic leaders and community members who are outraged at “those who claim to kill in the name of God,” and, Clinton said, “we are determined to prevent extremists from driving wedges between Muslims and non-Muslims — in America or anywhere.”

“Islam is — and must be — an important part of the solution in confronting violent extremism,” she said.

On February 13, President Obama announced that White House staff member Rashad Hussain has been appointed as his [special envoy to the Organization of the Islamic Conference \(OIC\)](#). Hussain will focus on mutual interests between the United States and Muslim communities such as education, entrepreneurship, science and technology, health issues such as eradicating polio, and opposition to violent extremism.

“As an accomplished lawyer and a close and trusted member of my White House staff, Rashad has played a key role in developing the partnerships I called for in Cairo,” Obama told conference attendees in Doha through a video address.

The president acknowledged that realizing the goals he outlined in his speech “will take a long-term commitment,” but in the eight months since his remarks “I believe we’ve laid the groundwork to turn those pledges into action.”

Senator John Kerry, chairman of the U.S. Senate Foreign Relations Committee, [told the U.S.-Islamic World Forum February 13](#) that President Obama’s speech in Cairo and subsequent U.S. actions mark “the beginning of a long road.”

“Today, we are in a fundamentally better place than we were a year ago,” Kerry said. “Quiet accomplishments and new attitudes and policies have put our partnerships on firmer footing.”

Americans recognize the need for deeper understanding and reject the demonization of Islam, he said. “Our values and our history remind us constantly that religious bigotry — whether it is anti-Semitism or Islamophobia — has no place in our public life.”

There is also “serious debate ... under way within Muslim communities over how best to address extremism and combat prejudice,” the senator said. He praised Jordan’s King Abdullah II for promoting Muslim-Christian dialogue through his “A Common Word” initiative, as well as dialogue efforts by King Abdullah of Saudi Arabia and the OIC conference itself, which is being hosted by Qatar.

Kerry also said Obama has worked to increase educational and science exchanges between the United States and Muslims around the world in order to promote people-to-people relationships.

7. U.N. Sanctions Against Iran Would Target Revolutionary Guard (02-15-2010)

By Stephen Kaufman
Staff Writer

Washington — The United States wants the Middle East ultimately to be free of nuclear arms, and while the Obama administration remains open to engagement with Iran, it is working with others in the international community on economic sanctions to discourage the Iranian government from pursuing those weapons.

“We are still hoping that Iran will decide to forgo any nuclear ambitions for nuclear weapons, and begin to respect its own people more on a daily basis,” Secretary of State Hillary Rodham Clinton said February 15. “But we cannot just keep hoping for that. We have to work to take action to try to convince the Iranian government not to pursue nuclear weapons.”

Clinton was speaking to students at Carnegie Mellon University in Qatar at a “Townterview” moderated by Al Jazeera satellite television.

In her remarks, she mentioned the September 2009 revelation that Iran had a secret nuclear facility at Qom, the Iranian government’s refusal of an international offer to enrich uranium for civilian use, and its recent decision to begin enriching uranium to 20 percent, a level Clinton described as “troubling.”

“I wish that Iran would take a different approach,” she said. “The United States under President Obama would really welcome a positive, normal relationship with Iran. But you can’t do that unless there is something coming back to you. And there hasn’t been.”

The Obama administration is working with others in the international community to apply pressure on Iran through United Nations sanctions that “will be particularly aimed at those enterprises controlled by the Revolutionary Guard,” which she said is supplanting the Iranian government, including its supreme leader, president and parliament.

“Iran is moving toward a military dictatorship,” Clinton warned.

On February 10, the Obama administration targeted existing U.S. sanctions on Iran's Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps (IRGC) [against one of its corporate entities, Khatam al-Anbiya Construction Headquarters](#), and its commander, Rostam Qasemi, who is also a general in the IRGC.

Clinton called upon the rest of the world to unite and send an "unequivocal message" that it "will not stand idly by" as Iran pursues a nuclear program that can threaten others in the region and beyond.

"Our goal, eventually, is to have a Middle East free of nuclear weapons," she said. President Obama has said he wants to eliminate nuclear weapons from all over the world. The United States is currently negotiating with Russia to reduce its own arsenal "because we are very committed to demonstrating ... the importance that we place on this goal," Clinton said.

She said leaders and influential people from the broader Middle East have expressed their concerns over a nuclear-armed Iran, and their need to respond if that scenario becomes a reality.

"That's not something that they want to spend their money on, that they want to be involved in. But, on the other hand, they don't want to live in a region where they feel threatened," she said.

The Obama administration's emphasis on nonproliferation is also manifest in its determination to prevent violent extremists such as al-Qaida from obtaining nuclear material to make a bomb.

"This is not the Cold War. In the Cold War the feeling was that you could deter each other," she said. "When you have people who are willing to kill themselves, and kill many others at the same time, that upsets the balance."

The secretary also discussed ongoing U.S. efforts to urge Israel and the Palestinians back to the negotiating table to reach a peace agreement and establish an independent Palestinian state based on the 1967 lines with mutually agreed land swaps.

"No one can dictate to either the Israelis or the Palestinians what the outcome should be. They must make those decisions themselves. But the United States is very focused on being a facilitator and a help in every way possible to achieve that outcome," she said.

She described the situation in Gaza as "a humanitarian crisis." The Obama administration has contributed "many, many hundreds of millions of dollars" to assist Palestinians there, as well as to encourage more aid and materials to be allowed in.

"We have begun to deal with the immediate necessities of food and medical supplies. But we need housing for people to live in. We need hospitals rebuilt. We need schools that can function and provide an education. And we are continuing to push very hard for that to be realized," she said.

But she repeated calls for Hamas, which controls Gaza, to renounce violence, recognize Israel, and to "be part of the solution, going forward."

On Iraq, the secretary said she is pleased with the progress the country is making as U.S. combat troops are on schedule to withdraw from the country by August.

The people of Iraq have a democratically elected government and are exercising control over their natural resources. The United States hopes that Iraq will remain a democratic and pluralistic society

“where every part of the country gets to participate, that there isn’t any tilting of power for or against any group within Iraq,” she said.

As part of their democratic future, “the Iraqi people will have the benefit of their oil revenues. Not one group, not any individual,” she said, and they can choose to invest the revenues in education, health care, housing and other areas that will benefit the larger society.

“That is what we hope for them, and that is the direction that the Iraqi government seems to be headed,” she said.

8. President Obama’s Remarks to U.S.-Islamic World Forum (02-13-2010)

U.S. seeks new partnerships in Muslim communities around the world

Assalaamu alaykum. And on behalf of the American people—including Muslim communities across America—greetings as you gather for the 7th U.S.-Islamic World Forum in Doha.

I want to thank all those whose support has made this Forum possible, especially the Amir of Qatar, the government of Qatar and the Saban Center at the Brookings Institution. It is fitting that you gather again in Doha—a place where our countries come together to forge innovative partnerships in education and medicine, science and technology.

Thank you all for being here. As leaders in government, academia, media, business, faith organizations and civil society, you understand that we are all bound together by common aspirations—to live with dignity, to get an education, to enjoy healthy lives, to live in peace and security, and to give our children a better future.

Yet you also know that the United States and Muslims around the world have often slipped into a cycle of misunderstanding and mistrust that can lead to conflict rather than cooperation.

That is why in Cairo last year I called for a new beginning between the United States and Muslims around the world, one based on mutual interest and mutual respect. I laid out a vision where we all embrace our responsibilities to build a world that is more peaceful and secure. It has only been eight months since Cairo, and much remains to be done. But I believe we’ve laid the groundwork to turn those pledges into action.

The United States is responsibly ending the war in Iraq; we are removing all our combat brigades from Iraq by the end of August, and we will partner with the Iraqi people on behalf of their long-term security and prosperity. In Afghanistan and beyond, we are forging partnerships to isolate violent extremists, reduce corruption and to promote good governance and development that improves lives. We remain unyielding in pursuit of a two-state solution that recognizes the rights and security of Israelis and Palestinians. And the United States will continue to stand for the human rights and dignity of people around the world.

And while the United States will never waver in these efforts, I also pledged in Cairo to seek new partnerships in Muslim communities around the world—not just with governments, but with people, to address the issues that matter most in our daily lives.

Since then, my administration has made a sustained effort to listen. We’ve held thousands of events and town halls—with students, civil society groups, faith leaders and entrepreneurs—in the United

States and around the world, including Secretary Clinton's landmark visit to Pakistan. And I look forward to continuing the dialogue during my visit to Indonesia next month.

This dialogue has helped us turn many of the initiatives I outlined in Cairo into action.

We're partnering to promote education. We're expanding exchange programs and pursuing new opportunities for online learning, connecting students in America with those in Qatar and other Muslim communities. Because knowledge is the currency of the 21st century, and countries that educate their children—including their daughters—are more likely to prosper.

We're partnering to broaden economic development. We're working to ensure that the global economic recovery creates jobs and prosperity in all regions of the world. And to help foster innovation and job-creation, I'll host a Summit on Entrepreneurship in April with business leaders and entrepreneurs from Muslim communities around the world.

We're partnering to increase collaboration on science and technology. We've launched a Global Technology and Innovation Fund that will invest in technological development across the Middle East, Africa and Asia. And the first of our distinguished Science Envoys have begun visiting countries to deepen science and technology cooperation over the long-term.

And we're partnering to promote global health. We worked together to address H1N1, which was a concern of many Muslims during the hajj. We've joined with the Organization of the Islamic Conference to eradicate polio. And as part of our increased commitment to foreign assistance, we've launched major initiatives to promote global health and food security around the world.

To deepen these partnerships, and to develop others, I'm proud to announce today that I am appointing my Special Envoy to the OIC—Rashad Hussain. As an accomplished lawyer and a close and trusted member of my White House staff, Rashad has played a key role in developing the partnerships I called for in Cairo. And as a hafiz of the Qur'an, he is a respected member of the American Muslim community, and I thank him for carrying forward this important work.

None of this will be easy. Fully realizing the new beginning we envision will take a long-term commitment. But we have begun. Now, it falls to us all, governments and individuals, to do the hard work that must be done—turning words into deeds and “Writing the Next Chapter” in the ties between us, with faith in each other, on the basis of mutual respect.

Thank you coming to Doha in that spirit. Thank you for your work to advance the principles we share—justice and progress, tolerance and the dignity of all human beings.

Let us succeed together. And may God's peace be upon you.

9. Iranian Enrichment Claims Cast More Doubt on Nuclear Intentions (02-12-2010)

By Stephen Kaufman
Staff Writer

Washington — While Obama administration officials express doubts over the Iranian government's claim to have dramatically increased its uranium enrichment capacity, Iran's actions are also increasing doubts that its nuclear program has peaceful intentions.

White House press secretary Robert Gibbs said February 11 that Iranian President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad's claim to have increased Iran's uranium enrichment from 3.5 percent to nearly 20 percent is "based on politics, not on physics," and he cited a lack of capability in the Iranian nuclear program.

Gibbs pointed out that Russia, China, the United Kingdom, France, Germany and the United States, collectively known as the P5+1, had offered through the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) to enrich Iranian uranium supplies to 20 percent for use in its Tehran medical research reactor.

The deal would have helped to allay international concerns that Iran is pursuing nuclear weapons under the cover of its civilian program while providing the country with fuel for its nuclear reactors.

"If they are serious about the peaceful use of their nuclear program, then what they should have done was taken more seriously the offer on the Tehran research reactor [TRR]," Gibbs said, adding that Iran "cannot replace and continue to operate the TRR at its current pace" because it will run out of the type of isotopes that are needed for medical treatment.

Iran's apparent decision not to accept "a very common-sense offer" from the IAEA and its partners "leads, quite frankly, the world to believe that Iran has other ideas" than — as it claims — that its nuclear activities are for peaceful purposes only, he said.

"If your program is one for peaceful needs, why not accept the help of the IAEA in ensuring the health and safety of your people? I think, again, their walking away from that agreement demonstrates for the whole world to see what their intentions really are," Gibbs said.

On February 10, the Obama administration [targeted existing U.S. sanctions](#) on Iran's Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps (IRGC) against one of its corporate entities, Khatam al-Anbiya Construction Headquarters, and its commander, Rostam Qasemi, who is also a general in the IRGC.

The IRGC was designated as "having engaged, or attempted to engage, in proliferation-related activities" in 2007, and Khatam al-Anbiya "is owned or controlled by the IRGC and is involved in the construction of streets, highways, tunnels, water conveyance projects, agricultural restoration projects, and pipelines," according to a statement by the Treasury Department.

The measure freezes any U.S. assets of General Qasemi and Fater Engineering Institute, Imensazen Consultant Engineers Institute (ICEI), Makin Institute, and Rahab Institute, which are all subsidiary companies of Khatam al-Anbiya.

At the State Department, Assistant Secretary of State for Public Affairs P.J. Crowley told reporters February 11 that the international community needs to collectively "make clear to Iran that the present course that it's on is not the correct one," and that it needs to address concerns over its nuclear activities.

"As much as people want to make this a face-off between the United States and Iran, this is a question about Iran and its future relationship with other countries in the region, and other countries around the world," Crowley said.

"We haven't closed the door to engagement," he added, but Iran's government has "consistently shown that it is unwilling to engage constructively."

IRAN'S GOVERNMENT FEARS ITS OWN PEOPLE

Asked about continued political unrest against the Iranian regime, Crowley said that Iranian authorities have attempted "a near-total information blockade" against their people in addition to their ongoing use of force and restrictions on the freedoms of assembly and expression.

"We've seen reports that the phone system has been taken down, text messaging has been taken down, satellite television has been jammed, the Internet has been throttled," Crowley said, all of which is inhibiting the ability of the Iranian people to communicate and access information. Opposition demonstrations had been scheduled to take place February 11.

Crowley described the regime's actions as "a Draconian step," and "a remarkable statement today of how significantly the Iranian government now fears its own people."

The continued intimidation "is a great concern to us, and we think it shows the increasing bankruptcy of the Iranian regime," he added.

10. Statement on Contribution to U.N. Agency for Palestine Refugees (02-04-2010) **United States provides \$40 million for humanitarian services**

United States Contributes \$40 Million to the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East

The United States announced today that it is making an initial contribution of \$40 million to the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA) to support UNRWA's regular budget and emergency programs in the West Bank and Gaza.

The \$40 million contribution will provide critical health, education, and humanitarian services to 4.7 million Palestinian refugees across the region. Of this contribution, \$30 million will support UNRWA's core services in Jordan, Syria, Lebanon, the West Bank, and Gaza. An additional \$10 million will support UNRWA's emergency appeal for the West Bank and Gaza, including emergency food assistance, and job creation programs.

The United States is UNRWA's largest bilateral donor. In 2009, the United States provided over \$267 million to UNRWA, including \$116.2 million to its General Fund, \$119.5 million to its West Bank/Gaza emergency programs, \$30 million to emergency programs in Lebanon, and \$2.2 million to assist other Palestinians in the region.

11. U.S. Statement on Security, Stability in Georgia (02-04-2010) **Diplomat repeats U.S. commitment to Georgia's sovereignty, independence**

United States Mission to the OSCE, Statement on the Geneva Discussions
As delivered by Chargé d'Affaires Carol Fuller to the Permanent Council, Vienna

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

The United States was pleased to participate in the January 28 round of the Geneva discussions on security and stability arrangements in Georgia.

We welcome the co-chairs' efforts to identify interim steps that can improve the security, humanitarian, and human rights situation on the ground and lay the groundwork for more far-reaching arrangements. One such step, the Incident Prevention and Response Mechanisms (IPRM), provides an important forum for addressing issues of concern in the Abkhazia and South Ossetia regions on a regular and pragmatic basis. Unfortunately, the operation of the IPRM for the South Ossetia region has been suspended for three months. We call on all participants to agree to reconvene this important mechanism without delay.

Although the conflict region has stabilized to a great extent, violent incidents persist, and civilians continue to face a precarious humanitarian and human rights situation.

We continue to believe the OSCE and other international actors have a valuable role to play in addressing these problems. We remain convinced that an international presence throughout Georgia is critical and continue to urge the re-establishment of a robust OSCE presence there.

As we work to improve the security and humanitarian situation in Georgia, we will continue to call for the parties to the conflict to comply with their obligations under international humanitarian law; to urge respect for the human rights of all individuals in the conflict areas; to call for free and unhindered access to the whole of Georgia; and to seek the safe, dignified, and voluntary return of internally displaced persons and refugees.

We welcome the Georgian Government's adoption of a new strategy of engagement with the Abkhazia and South Ossetia regions – a potentially constructive step towards easing tensions and a way to reach out to all the regions' residents.

We also welcome the upcoming visit to Georgia of the Chairman-in-Office. We hope Foreign Minister Saudabayev will be successful in furthering discussions of key issues, including water and gas supplies in the South Ossetia region, the re-establishment of an OSCE presence in Georgia, and a follow-up to the November 2008 joint ODIHR/HCNM report on human rights in the war-affected areas of Georgia. We look forward to a report on the foreign minister's trip and to the Chairmanship's continued engagement on these issues.

As Secretary Clinton stated last week in her speech on European security, we have repeatedly called on the Russian Federation to honor the terms of its cease-fire agreement with Georgia. Russia committed not only to withdraw its troops to positions held prior to the start of hostilities, but also to provide free access for humanitarian assistance to the South Ossetia and Abkhazia regions. We remind the Russian Federation that its characterization of these regions as independent does not relieve it of these commitments.

In closing, Mr. Chairman, let me reiterate our firm commitment to Georgia's sovereignty, independence, and territorial integrity within its internationally recognized borders.

Thank you.
